

STOREFRONT

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

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Basilico: Beirut

February 21-March 29, 1997

Photographs by **Gabriele Basilico**
Curated by **Francesco Bonami**

Video from Beirut lent by **Raoul Bunschoten**
Architectural Association in London

With CD-ROM led by **Allen Sayegh, Markus Schaefer,
Michelle Tarsney, Lillian Kuri
and Ayman Zahreddine**
Harvard University, Graduate School of Design

These black and white photographs are taken by Gabriele Basilico in 1991, documenting the devastated architecture landscape of war-torn Beirut. Basilico concentrates on the center of the city to produce a personal interpretation of a critical period in the history of Beirut, fifteen years of a gruelling civil war that began in 1975. This documentation is also important to the subsequent reconstruction of the city.

In conjunction with Basilico's photographs, Storefront has invited a collaborative research team from Harvard University to participate in this exhibition. Their contribution is a CD-ROM, a part of a series of projects undertaken by the Graduate School of Design on the reconstruction of Beirut which will take place over the coming years. The CD-ROM is the product of work conducted at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design led by Allen Sayegh, Instructor in the Department of Architecture, and including Markus Schaefer (March 98), Michelle Tarsney (March 98), Lillian Kuri (MAUD 96), and Ayman Zahreddine (MAUD 97).

"It had been an absurd and ruthless war, viciously conducted against a backdrop of alliances and betrayals among the warring factions. It was a war of attrition fought with light and medium weapons that destroyed hundreds of thousands of human lives and devastated the center of the city. In the area of one kilometer by one and a half the shooting had been ceaseless, in the streets, from the windows, from the roofs and even in the most sacred and private places, as the hundreds of spent cartridges of all calibres that can be found in the most unlikely spots serve to demonstrate. Photography was entrusted with the civil duty of contributing to the construction of a historic memory with its testimony of human madness." —Gabriele Basilico.

Gabriele Basilico, born in Milan, 1944, is today one of the best-known documentary photographers in Europe. An architect by training, Basilico has been primarily concerned with urban and industrialized landscapes.

For further information contact Paola Morrongiello at 212 431 5795

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September 25, 1998

NEA: FINAL DESCRIPTIVE REPORT

On April 8, 1997 Storefront for Art & Architecture received a \$20,000 grant (Grant Number: 97-4206-5013) towards a major exhibition concerning the destruction and reconstruction of the city of Beirut. The exhibition, held from February 21 - March 29, 1997, consisted of the following components:

1) **BASILICO: Beirut**, an exhibition of photographs by the Italian artist Gabriele Basilico, curated by Francesco Bonami. These black and white photographs, taken in 1991, documented the devastated architectural landscape of war-torn Beirut. Basilico concentrated on the center of the city to produce a personal interpretation of a critical period in the history of Beirut, fifteen years of civil war that began in 1975. The Beirut photographs were not a judgment on war but a reflection on what a city is left with once war eventually ends. The idea of a city remained intact even if its political and social structures were attacked. Basilico noted the damages while also celebrating the incredible possibilities and perspectives that any kind of survival can produce. Thus the documentation has also been important for the subsequent reconstruction of the city. The photos of Beirut, where buildings stand with no less dignity than the Coliseum in Rome's traffic jam, caused us to consider how these images will affect the future history of the city, its architectural development and memory.

Born in Milan in 1944, Gabriele Basilico is one of the best-known documentary photographers in Europe, an architect by training, who has been primarily concerned with urban and industrial landscapes. This was his first showing in the United States.

2) **Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of the Modern City**, an interactive CD-ROM created by the collaborative research team of Rodolphe el-Khoury, Hashim Sarkis and Allen Sayegh from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. The CD-ROM traced the urban history of Beirut from the 1830's to the present with an emphasis on the construction of the city as the capitol of the modern state of Lebanon during the 1950's and 1960's, and the reconstruction efforts after the 15-year civil war. It was presented in the form of four inter-referenced narratives: 1) A timeline overlapping the city's urban history with a political history of Lebanon and

the region. 2) Comparison between the architecture of the 1950's and 1960's and the present, focusing on such large-scale undertakings as the city's Master Plans, and its major infrastructure including the airport, the extensive road network, the plan for the Central Business District and government complexes and institutions as well as samples of private development projects. 3) Morphological study of the growth of the city from the 1830's to the present, highlighting the major periods of growth and the demographic and economic reasons behind them. 4) Biographies and significant projects of architects from the 1950's and 1960's and the present including Andre Wogenscky, Oscar Niemeyer, Alfred Roth, Alvar Aalto and local architects such as Assem Salam, Pierre Khoury, Wassek Adib and Jad Tabet. This project was first presented at StoreFront and later was part of a larger exhibition at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design which traveled to Beirut.

3) Video documentation of the war in Beirut taken by Lebanese filmmakers, which captured the live trauma of the war. The footage was lent to StoreFront by Architectural Association, an architectural institution based in London.

The exhibition of these projects was extremely well received and was favorably reviewed by the New York Times. Approximately 3,000 visitors attended the exhibition. Funding from the National Endowment for the Arts enabled us to cover the costs of shipment of photographs, installation (materials and crew), announcements and posters, artist's fees and equipment rental (computer, CD-ROM player, VCR and monitor).

The grant project enabled StoreFront to present a major exhibition of photographic work by the Italian artist Gabriele Basilico. Funding from the NEA enabled StoreFront to cover the cost of shipment of photographs, installation (materials and crew), announcements and posters and the artist's fees. Basilico is one of the best-known documentary photographers in Europe, and the StoreFront exhibition, his first showing in the United States, introduced his work to an American audience. In conjunction with this exhibition, NEA funding provided equipment and installation for two related projects--a unique CD-ROM created by a collaborative research team from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, and a series of documentary videos taken by Lebanese filmmakers during the war in Beirut. Through these projects, which deal with urban issues on an international level, NEA funding supported the presentation of works by European, Lebanese and American contributors.

(1) There were three main activities supported by this grant: A major exhibition of photographic work by Gabriele Basilico which documented the devastated architectural landscape of war-torn Beirut; a CD-ROM by a collaborative research team from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, and a series of documentary videos taken by Lebanese filmmakers during the war in Beirut. There were no significant problems encountered in implementing these projects. They were successful in creating a forum for discourse in both the fields of visual arts and architecture on important issues of the urban environment. In addition, StoreFront was proud to present not just the issue of urban destruction and decay, but to also bring up important efforts of reconstruction in a multidisciplinary context.

(2) Approximately 12 artists were involved with this project. Gabriele Basilico documented the devastated architectural landscape of war-torn Beirut. Francesco Bonami curated the exhibition of Basilico's photographs. The collaborative team of Rodolphe el-Khoury, Hashim Sarkis and Allen Sayegh from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design created a CD-ROM that traces the urban history of Beirut and its reconstruction efforts. In addition, approximately 5 to 7 anonymous Lebanese filmmakers created the video documentaries that were exhibited as part of the project. The footage was lent to StoreFront by the Architectural Association, an architectural institution based in London.

(3) The exhibition of these projects was extremely well received and was favorably reviewed by the New York Times. Approximately 3,000 visitors attended the exhibition. The audience for this project consisted largely of architects, artists and students from the New York City area; however, StoreFront also attracts a significant number of international visitors.

(4) Through NEA funding, StoreFront was able to provide a very valuable and unique program to the New York city audience regarding issues of the

urban environment on an international level. This grant was useful in generating in-kind support to StoreFront.

(5) By presenting important issues of urban destruction and reconstruction in an international and multidisciplinary context, this exhibition has greatly benefited the community of New York architects, artists and students. The works encouraged new levels of thinking and discourse on the specific problems of Beirut and on the problems facing cities around the world. The exhibition also placed a focus on approaches for rebuilding, influencing architects and students to consider not just the negative aspects of contemporary urbanism but also the possibilities for future growth and development.

GETTING TO THE HEART OF BEIRUT

Gabriele Basilico interviewed
by Gabriel Bauret.
June 1994

I imagine the Beirut project was different from past assignments, like for example that of the D.A.T.A.R.

GB The Beirut project was, in a certain sense, based on the same "approach" as the D.A.T.A.R. project. However, Beirut was going through an momentous period and its physical features were so different to other cities I had worked on. The city has undergone a violent transformation which I think, affected the attitude of the photographers working with me.

Beirut having in some way stopped living, did you have the feeling of working in a different world? A city is not merely a set of buildings: it is often compared to a living organism, the role of the photographer being then to record a moment of its evolution. This was not the case in Beirut evidently. Was your approach conditioned by this?

GB It is certain that when one arrives there, one feels the weight of history, and it is a very heavy load to carry. I arrived at night, a very clear night, and I was taken on a tour of the city. One could hear only the engines of the electric generators. The city wasn't lit and the buildings had a ghostly appearance. One could only feel the space but not the substance. The atmosphere was both grave and fascinating. The next day I started searching for locations. I looked at the city in a straightforward way without thinking about what I had to do, like someone getting ready to bear witness, in a very normal way, to a certain state of affairs. I did not know what method to apply, indeed whether to apply any method at all, or on what ideology or theory to base my work. Then I began to move more freely, systematically taking photos with a 6x9 camera, establishing thus a progressive relationship with the city. Rather as I did for the D.A.T.A.R.

The assignment was I think, geographically restricted to the city centre.

GB Working on a limited area like this one, which is slightly larger than a square kilometre, allows one to look more deeply into the subject: I therefore started examining the old city centre from different points of view, for example by climbing to the top of many buildings. I did a lot of location search at different times, in

order better to understand the city and be in tune with it. This process is very important to me, because I consider myself first and foremost a documentary photographer. I endeavour to show a comprehensible and recognizable reality. I do not try to transform this reality in any way. I work on what is visible, but sometimes there are things we do not see immediately, and the role of the photographer is precisely to bring them to light. In other words, and even more paradoxically, I say that what is important to me is to work on what is visible in order to photograph the invisible.

But let us go back to the important question of the vantage point.

GB My aim is to find a key allowing me to establish a personal and emotional relationship with the place, to engage in some sort of dialogue with the city, the most human dialogue possible. I wanted to put myself at ease and stop touching this city as if it were nothing but an open wound, a relic. Some days later, I started taking photos with a large format camera, that is, I started to work seriously.

You worked on this project along with other photographers. Did this hamper you? Did you refrain from taking certain pictures on the assumption that others could have taken them?

GB It is true that the presence of photographers like Robert Frank was exciting. I was also very happy to work at the same time as René Burri, whom I had never met before, and Fouad El Khoury, the youngest of us all, who was from Beirut and had been an architect. Having said that, I was never concerned with what the other photographers were doing, I had enough problems dealing with this very exciting but risky assignment.

Given the circumstances, were you never tempted to depart from your usual point of view?

GB At the beginning I didn't know what the others were doing except for Robert Frank, who was working with a Polaroid and making collages. I was happy to be part of this group but I never thought of working by comparing the results of our work. I forgot the other photographers the moment I found the key to enter the city.

KYONG PARK
FROM: F. BOWAMI
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The key, namely a kind of adjustment to reality through finding, among other things, the correct distance between subject and object.

GB In fact, in Beirut as elsewhere, I refused to conceptualize. I never build a priori theories. The matter was mainly to overcome the feeling of pain I had felt when I entered the city, whose beauty was as impressive as its destruction. It was the first time that I had found myself in such a situation and I therefore approached the city timidly, looking at very simple things. When I climbed to the top floor of the Hilton hotel, I realized that Beirut was not very different from cities like Palermo. Without going into details and, in particular without looking at the wounds Beirut had suffered, I saw a Mediterranean city. I was encouraged to see it in this way by the Lebanese who accompanied me : they were trying to imagine the future of Beirut, considering the war to be a thing of the past and forcefully expressing their desire to reconstruct the city.

So you projected yourself into the future with them.

GB Above all, I penetrated the complex structure of the city by getting rid of the dramatising effects due to history : I looked at it as though I were looking at Rome or Naples. I then started walking more rapidly, wanting to look at all the details and to devour everything. I realized that the parts which were completely destroyed were in the last analysis, quite few. They were, to a large extent, the result of the Israeli shellings of 1982. For the rest the damage was caused by light armament but the continuous battles left traces everywhere. In fact it was a tribal war which started as a result of the breakdown of a fragile equilibrium between different schools of thought. As a result, the structure of Beirut remained clearly marked, taking the shape of a kind of skin disease, a dreadful disease which underlines the absurdity of every war. I did not however dwell too long on this aspect. I attempted rather to give a presence back to the city, beyond its wounds. This is of course a personal point of view, but I felt that one could very easily reconstitute the whole of the area and even retrace the history of its construction and main developments. I tried not to depart from this course : I avoided being taken in by the photogenic character of the destruction. Instead I endeavoured to imagine the city in its original form, ready to come back to life.

If the architects design a project for Beirut, it will be different depending on whether they rely on your photographs or on those of Josef Koudelka ; the latter tend to amplify the effect of the destruction.

GB Our work could indeed have very different political overtones.

Why do you insist so much on working dispassionately ?

GB I do not necessarily insist on it, but in my opinion, a documentary project presupposes working dispassionately. It is true that when I arrive on the scene of a disaster, I am incapable of reporting on it.

Even less to amplify it.

GB I try to think that this town can continue to exist. I try to imagine it from its remaining structure. That is why I tried to think about it as a global entity. Had I gone into too much detail, I would have undertaken a very different kind of work.

Did you see the city before the war ?

GB No, I had heard about it, and seen postcards. I also saw pictures of the city during the war, and this created certain problems for me : these pictures were the limits I did not want to reach. Ruins are truly more harrowing than architecture. A certain magic emanates from them. Since Piranesi visual artists have always been fascinated by ruins.

This fascination for ruins has something romantic about it.

GB Yes, and anyway I did not want to use Beirut in order to produce sculptures of some sort. I wanted to resist the temptation of making "strong" images, which to my mind, would have constituted false documents.

You did not want to "do Art".

GB I don't much like this formulation. Let us say I did not want to use reality in order to transmit a parallel message.

By "doing Art" I meant a way of twisting reality in order to produce a spectacle.

GB It is true that Italian culture, to which I am of course tied, has always had something to do with beauty. Even

in a dramatic situation we see beauty. German artists, for example, don't have the same philosophy. It seems to me that they consider beauty to be a very ambiguous and dangerous value.

*Is it the case that precisely in Beirut, emptiness and absence do not weigh all that heavily?
In the photographs you take we rarely see people,
it is true, we nevertheless have the feeling
of a certain presence.*

GB In effect, "my" towns are never really empty. In Beirut it was not so different. It looked as though people had abandoned a certain space in order to come back to it shortly.

The absence was only a bit longer than elsewhere.

GB Yes, I felt that people had already passed by and that I was going to see others coming. All in all, the situation was quite normal and the city was only waiting.

It wasn't a real absence.

GB Emptiness never really means absence. It is rather a moment of silence which allows me to initiate a dialogue with reality. One has to express this intimate dialogue by avoiding all form of romanticism.

*While working, did you think about the way
your photographs could be published? In the form
of an itinerary, as in this book for example?*

GB No, when I work, a kind of illness befalls me. I want to record everything and in so doing, I want to become the city itself. To use a culinary metaphor, one could compare the city to another form of culture, food: one understands it by eating it, without using words. It is not enough to look at reality, one has to immerse oneself in it, and this cannot be done in a single day.

*In Beirut or elsewhere, do you have the feeling
of conveying a message through your photographs
and your vision of the world?*

GB In the Seventies, I supported the photographers who were showing capitalistic violence against cities, and more particularly against architecture. At the time, it was the content of the message that was important, and the language had to meet this requirement. Later I

understood that every form of communication necessarily carried a message, and this in a more or less objective manner. One has therefore to act on the medium, on the instrument of communication. For my part, I have chosen the documentary style, while being conscious of its subjectivity. I endeavour to understand the landscape as it presents itself to me and I try to photograph it without formulating a judgement. It is not the absence of any judgment but, its provisional suspension at the very moment when the picture is taken, which enables one to be in total harmony with reality.



In 1991, I was invited by the Lebanese writer Dominique Eddé to take part in a project with the aim of documenting photographically the central zone of the city of Beirut.

The work was planned for a group of photographers whose experiences would cross-fertilize freely. I found myself working alongside Raymond Depardon, René Burri, Josef Koudelka, Fouad Elkoury and Robert Frank. The uniqueness of the project excited me as did the composition of the group, whose prestige was enhanced by these famous and outstanding artists. Robert Frank, whose book *The Americans* had revolutionized international photographic art, was a particularity noteworthy participant. Our brief ensured we had complete liberty of expression. No one had been assigned any specific task nor were there any fixed territories of operation. Only the topographical area had been laid down and it was the same for everybody. It comprised the central part of the city, bordered to the north by the sea, to the south by the circular road known as the Ring, to the east by Christian zone and to the west by a "mixed" zone.

Our task was not to produce a reportage or a photographic inventory but to put together a "state of things", a direct experience of place through free personal interpretation at a critical, unrepeatable moment in the history of Beirut. This was the end, in 1990, of a gruelling war that had begun fifteen

years before on 13 April 1975 and the subsequent expectation of a reconstruction. It had been an absurd and ruthless war, viciously conducted against a backdrop of alliances and betrayals among the warring factions. It was a war of attrition fought with light and medium weapons that destroyed hundreds of thousands of human lives and devastated the centre of the city. In the area of one kilometre by one and a half the shooting had been ceaseless, in the streets, from the windows, from the roofs and even in the most sacred and private places, as the hundreds of spent cartridges of all calibres that can be found in the most unlikely spots serve to demonstrate. Photography was entrusted with the civil duty of contributing to the construction of a historic memory with its testimony of human madness.

All of us worked in the period running from October to December 1991. In 1992, thanks to a contribution from the Hariri Foundation and under the artistic supervision of Robert Delpire, the volume *Beyrouth Centre Ville* (Beirut City Centre) (Éditions du Cyprès) was completed, featuring 130 photographs arranged into individual portfolios, a text by Dominique Eddé and lyric by Adonis. Later an exhibition, again under Robert Delpire's supervision, was held at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris and subsequently toured Europe.

Gabriele Basilico



Gabriele Basilico (born Milan, 1944) is today one of the best-known documentary photographers in Europe.

Basilico is primarily concerned with cities and industrialized cityscapes. An architect by training, he works professionally as a photographer of architecture for the publishing and manufacturing industries and for government bodies.

Gabriele Basilico has taken part in many photographic campaigns around Europe, including the *Mission Photographique de la D.A.T.A.R.* in France in 1984-1985.

A selection of Basilico's work is conserved in the art collections of several museums and institutes both public and private.

Gabriele Basilico has conceived and completed numerous books of photographs, including: *Milano, ritratti di fabbriche* (Milan, Portraits of Factories) (1983), *Italia & France* (1987), *Porti di mare* (Seaports) (1990), *Bord de mer* (Seashore) (1992) and *L'esperienza dei luoghi* (Experience of places) (1994).

In 1990, Gabriele Basilico was awarded the Prix Mois de la Photo for his exhibition *Porti di mare* (Seaports) in Paris.

Gabriele Basilico (Milano, 1944) è fra i più noti fotografi documentaristici oggi in Europa. Il suo campo d'azione comprende la città e il paesaggio industrializzato. Architetto di formazione, lavora professionalmente come fotografo di architettura per l'editoria, l'industria e le istituzioni.

Ha partecipato a numerose campagne fotografiche in Europa, tra le quali la *Mission Photographique de la D.A.T.A.R.* nel 1984-85, in Francia.

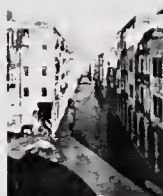
Una selezione di suoi lavori è conservata presso le collezioni d'arte di diversi musei, istituti pubblici e privati.

Ha concepito e realizzato numerosi libri fotografici tra i quali: *Milano, ritratti di fabbriche* (1983), *Italia & France* (1987), *Porti di mare* (1990), *Bord de mer* (1992), *L'esperienza dei luoghi* (1994).

Nel 1990 per la mostra *Porti di mare*, a Parigi, ha ricevuto il Prix Mois de la Photo.



Rue Gouraud



Rue El Maarad



Avenue Charles Helou



Rue Bechara El Khoury



Bâtiment Pl. Ma / Sud-Ouest



Rue Syrie



Rue Weygand



Rue Weygand



Rue Abdallah Beyhum



Rue Dirke



Rue Allemby / Rue Fakhry Bey



Rue Ghalghoul



Rue Salloum



Rue Karaouiya



Rue Dakar



Rue Dakar



Place Martyrs



Place Riad El Solh



Rue El Maarad



Rue Becara El Khoury



Rue Allemby



Rue Nahr Ibrahim



Rue Abdel Malek



Avenue Charles Helou



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Rue Petro Paoli



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Currents

Lucie Young

Photographs That Capture the Ruins and Ravages of War



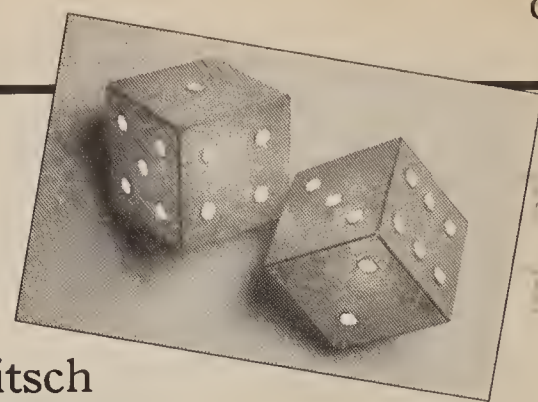
Gabriele Basilico

PICTURES of a devastated Beirut, Lebanon, by the Italian documentary photographer Gabriele Basilico, now showing at the Storefront for Art and Architecture on the Lower East Side, are both horrific and beautiful. His eerie shots of a one-kilometer-square area of the capital, taken in 1991, record the effect of the 15-year civil war on the city's architecture. The fact that this war's horrors are so fresh in the world's memory calls into question the romance usually attached to ruins.

"Since Piranesi, visual artists have always been fascinated by ruins," said Francesco Bonami, the curator of the exhibition. "We are used to all these monuments, and we take it for granted they were destroyed by time."

"The Parthenon in Greece was bombed by the Turks in the 17th century. We assume it just survived time. But it would have survived much better without human intervention. We have always assumed that the archeological sites we visit are the remains of great cultures and civilizations and not the results of ignorance and barbaric devastation."

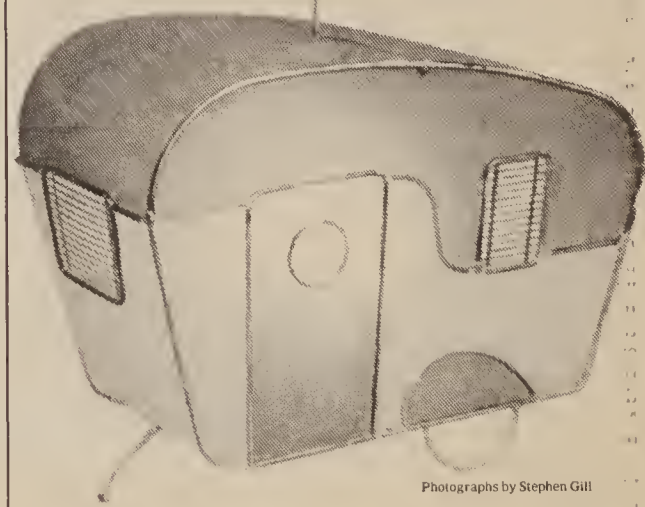
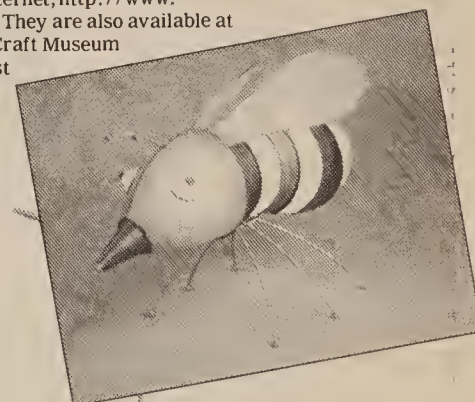
The stillness of the pictures — some look like underwater scenes with silting on the bottom and plants sprouting from walls — convey the atmosphere of hiatus between two epochal events: they were taken after the war but before the rebuilding that is going on now. The exhibition runs through March 29 at the Storefront, 97 Kenmare Street (at Lafayette Street).



Kitsch Lights Up His Life

AS a child, Daniel Sadler would design lampshades for his bedroom, and by high school he was making lighted sculptures out of everything from paper bags to a defunct television set. Now 39 and living in Los Angeles, he is creating lamps from his favorite kitsch icons — a cartoon-style covered wagon, a house trailer (bottom), a wall-mounted cigar, a giant pair of red and white dice (above), a Jetson's-style rocket and most recently a bumble bee (below). Each lamp is fashioned out of a rubbery plastic netting over a wire frame. The television-shaped lamp is his best seller and lights up the homes of Dustin Hoffman and Paul Reiser. Other Hollywood fans include Anjelica Houston, Patricia Arquette and Geena Davis. His lamps, \$350 each, can be ordered on the Internet, <http://www.vibrallites.com>. They are also available at the American Craft Museum

Store, at 40 West 53d Street; (212) 956-3535.



Photographs by Stephen Gill

Bathroom With Lots of Makeup



FOR Beth Katleman, minimalism is madness. "It is that insane-asylum look that doesn't give anyone any stimulation," she said. Her pop-gets-the-rocco set of bathroom fixtures can be seen in the window of Barneys New York on Seventh Avenue and 17th Street through April 1.

She made the sink, toilet and bidet in pastel green, blue and yellow last year while working as an artist in residence with the Kohler Company. The pieces bear close inspection: there's a Fred Flintstone toilet-flush pull and a gay wedding cameo encrusted into the front of the sink. This three-piece hive of activity is \$15,000. One of Ms. Katleman's inspirations was a bathroom at her Aunt Toby's house in the Bel Air section of Los Angeles. "She had a chandelier in there and a toilet seat that played 'The Star-Spangled Banner,'" she said.



Photographs by Eric R. Johnson

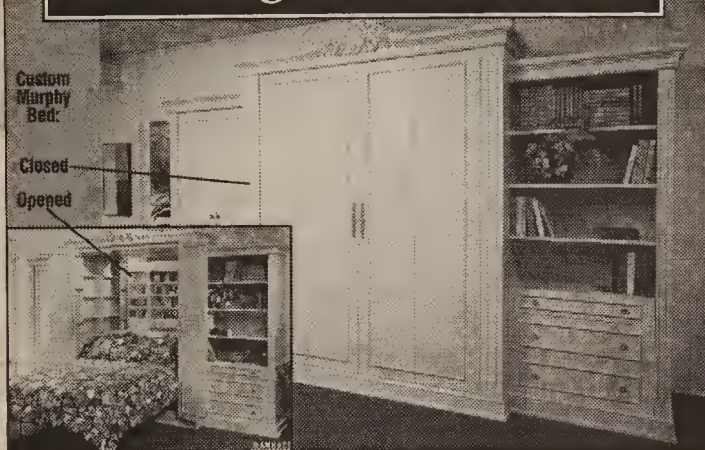


Barbara Baumgardt

LIFTING the lid on a Barbara Baumgardt box always yields a surprise. Some boxes are plain white or slate black on their pearl-smooth outside but 24-karat gold on the inside; others covered in pewter are a lustrous milky white within. They are glazed and fired at least three times. "Gold is the hardest," Ms. Baumgardt said. "It's the most expensive nothing if you get it wrong." A ceramist, Ms. Baumgardt stores old love letters, shells and jewelry in her boxes, which are four to eight inches across. "They are like an eggshell protecting something precious inside," she added. Prices: \$100 to \$250; (212) 809-3556.



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富、破壊、再生

バシリコ・バイルト

Basilico: Berrut

最近のマンハッタンは「世界一安全な街」になっているらしい。少なくともニュー Yorker に「あのエリアは危ないか」と訊ねると必ずそんな答えが返ってくる。

今年の冬のニューヨークは寒さも穏やかだった。そんな、平和で春の兆しを感じられるのんびりとしたロウアー・イースト・サイド。びったりと閉ざされたストアフロントギャラリーのアルミ色のドアをぐっと押すと、そこには「戦争」が保存されていた。

目の前に出現した、圧倒的な強さと、そして美しさを秘めたモノクロの写真は、イタリア人報道写真家ガブリエーレ・バシリコが1991年に写したバイルトの姿である。

Prosperity, destruction, and rebirth

It would appear that New York has recently become "the safest city in the world." At least that's the reply you get when you ask "isn't that area dangerous?" Winter was not so cold this year.... It's easy-going Lower Manhattan, where the signs of spring could be sensed in that sort of peaceful atmosphere. Giving StoreFront's tightly shut aluminum colored door a big push, I was surprised to find "war" preserved inside.





レバノン共和国の首都、ベイルート。歴史家アーノルド・トインビーはレバノンを「宗教の歴史博物館」と呼んだが、その言葉が示す通りさまざまな宗教、宗派、民族が入り乱れ火種が絶えない場所というのが、人々が一般的に持っている、この土地のイメージだろう。ベイルートはレバノンの地中海側でもとりわけぐっと海に突き出した半島部分にある。そんな地の利のためか、早くから文明が開け、紀元前3000年からフェニキア人が、また紀元前1世紀にはローマ人が、ここを地中海貿易の商業都市として発展させてきた。1960年以降も、ベイルートは、「中東のパリ」と呼ばれ、自由貿易港の国際金融、情報の中心地であり、日本の商社、銀行などの中近東の支社もこの街に多く置かれていた。モダンで繁栄した都市だったわけである。75年に内戦が勃発するまでは。

バシリコは15年に及ぶ内戦が終わったベ

イルートの街の様子をこのように記している。「非合理で無情な戦争だ。協定を背景に悪意に満ちた行為が行われ、派閥間の争い、裏切りがあった。街の中心だけで、軽装兵器で何百、何千という人が殺されている。縦1キロ横1キロ半の範囲で、銃痕は切れ目なく続いていた。通り、窓、そして屋根も。ここを写真におさめるということは、人間の狂気の証言とともに、歴史の記憶をつくりあげるといふ、一市民としての使命感をもって行われた」。

しかし、ここにあるのは戦争の悲惨な記録だけではない。エキシビションのキュレーター、フランチェスコ・ボナーミは「ピラネージを例にとるまでもなく、芸術家というのは常に廃墟に魅惑されてきた」と語っているが、ここで感じるのは失われたものに対するロマンティックな憧憬だけではないだろう。見る者に強い印象を与えるのは、近代都市が

ガブリエーレ・バシリコ 1944年イタリア、ミラノ生まれ。現在ヨーロッパで、もっともよく知られている報道カメラマンのひとり。建築家としてトレニンギを積んだためか、都市のランドスケープや都市開発に強い関心を寄せている。

Gabriele Basilico, born in 1944 in Milan. He is one of the best known documentary photographers. Enjoys Architecture by training, he is primarily concerned with urban landscape and development.

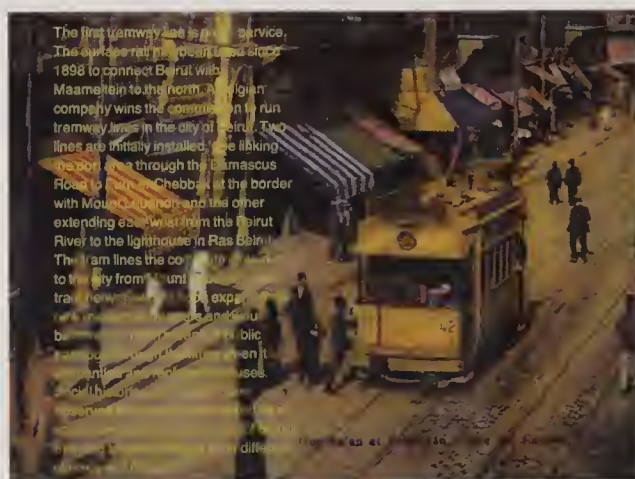


Basilico: Benvenuto

壊滅状態にあるという異常さとともに、その瓦礫の下から垣間見える、綿々と営まれる人々の生活の気配だ。また徹底的に破壊された廃墟の逆説として、反対に、そこから芽生える新しい生の強さをも想像させる。

写真展は2月21日から3月29日までで終わってしまったが、ストアフロントではバシリコの作品を紹介するだけにとどまらず、ハーバード大学デザイン学部大学院と共同でプロジェクトを進めている。これは1830年から現在までの、ペイルートの都市としての歴史を集大成しようとするもので、とりわけ50年代60年代の、近代国家レバノンの首都として建設されたペイルートの姿と、内戦後、復興の進む、現在の街の様子を比較している。このふたつの時代の共通点、対比点を明らかにすることによって、都市デザイン、都市環境はどうあるべきかを探ろうとするものだ。この結果はCD-ROMにまとめられ、ハーバード大学で4月11日から24日まで公開された。10月にはペイルートでも展示発表される予定だ。また、ハーバード大学では、CD-ROMを引き続き制作する予定で、何年後には生まれ変わったペイルートの姿が発表される。

現在ベイルートの再建は急ピッチで進んでいるという。



CD-ROMの画面、ハーバード大学大学院のルドルフ・エル・クーリー、ハシム・サルキス、アレン・サヤグラによって制作されている。

